

Mullet Madness

Come on down to the Gautier Mullet Festival and celebrate

By **AMANDA CREEL**

The Mississippi Press

GAUTIER —

Why do mullets jump? The only way to find out is to take a break and join the post-Katrina fun at the Gautier Mullet Festival.

The 15th annual Gautier Mullet Festival 2005, "Celebrating Our Coastal Heritage," will be as scheduled from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Oct. 8 at the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, Jackson County Campus.

Festival organizers are hoping to offer a break from the post-Katrina routine for residents of the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Even the winning poster by Alan Watson of Hurley picked for the festival is in the spirit of post Katrina fun.

"We wanted something that would invoke a festival feeling. Something fun and bright and something to show what a fun day it will be," said Anna Simpson, chairwoman of the festival committee. "And, it says the spunk of Gautier will come back out and have one day



Submitted Photo

2005 Gautier Mullet Festival poster by Alan Watson of Hurley

of fun, post Katrina."

"We just want them to sit down in the sunshine and enjoy some music and take a break," said Charles

Simpson, a member of the festival committee.

The Gautier Mullet Festival is offering its own form of hurricane relief by offer-

ing free entertainment to the whole family as part of this year's event.

"People don't really have a lot of money to spend, but

TO GO

What: 15th annual Gautier Mullet Festival

When: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 8

Where: Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, Jackson County Campus, Gautier

Details: Anyone interested in performing or scheduled to perform on the community stage should call Anna Simpson at (228) 522-0222.

Anyone interested in being a vendor should contact Anna Simpson at (228) 522-0222 or visit the Web site at GautierMullet@bell-south.net. All late fees are being waived for vendors.

they still need to be able to go out and have some fun and be entertained," said Scott Mitchell, member of the festival committee.

For the younger fans of the festival the rides, such as train rides, a giant slide, an obstacle course, a rock climb and other inflatable rides, will be free.

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Two 'Hometown Heroes' to reign over Gautier Mullet Festival

By **AMANDA CREEL**

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GAUTIER — The 15th annual Gautier Mullet Festival "Celebrating Our Heritage" has started a new tradition for selecting the royal couple to reign over the festivities.

For the first time, the

king and queen will be recognized for their accomplishments as "Hometown Heroes" during the mullet festival.

The festival organizers are working to recognize everyday heroes, whether it be at the high school football stadium or in the midst

of a natural disaster.

The royal couple will be able to bestow blessings on all the residents and festival attendees as they stroll around the festivities.

The king and queen of this year's mullet festival were chosen for their contri-

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William Colgin/The Mississippi Press

Cathy Schmucker, a teacher's assistant at College Park Elementary, is the 2005 Queen of the Gautier Mullet Festival.



William Colgin/The Mississippi Press

Johnny May with the street department in Gautier is the 2005 King of the Gautier Mullet Festival.

Festival

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"We are going to have an entire area for the kids. It will all be encased and supervised, so the parents can leave their kids there and not worry and then go chill and listen to the music," Mitchell said.

The children also will have the opportunity to participate in other free activities, such as story time with members of the staff of the Jackson and George County Public Library system and an opportunity to make wood crafts with wood carving expert Ken Muller.

Regardless of the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina, organizers have added some new events to the festival, however, some of the expansion plans had to be postponed until next year.

"The festival is not going to be what we thought it was pre-disaster, but it is still going to be a great time. We are just not going to let a storm get us down," said Gabriel Godbold, entertainment and financial director for the festival.

Some of the new additions to the festival will be the addition of a live music stage that will feature area artists and the addition of the Heritage Education Area will host live demos and fun activities for children to learn more about their Gulf Coast heritage.

The live entertainment will feature several bands that will perform throughout the day.

The head-liner for the entertainment stage is Amanda Shaw and the Cute Guys. The Center Stage Band, The Fuzzy Dice and the Brent Anderson Band also will perform during the festival.

Along with new additions, the traditions that have defined the mullet festival since its beginning, such as the mullet toss, the cast net toss and the mullet fry, will all be part of the festival.

One of the new additions to the festival last year, the car show, will continue this year with a few changes. The car show is open to anyone, there will be no sign-up fees and there will be only one category, the best of show, with

first, second and third place winners.

The arts and crafts fair will continue as scheduled with more vendors signing up every day. Vendors will offer all sorts of craft items such as pre-Katrina photographs of the Gulf Coast, pottery, stained glass art and hand-crafted wood items.

The Gautier Public Library is going to continue with the annual big book sale in conjunction with the Gautier Mullet Festival no matter what, said JoAnne West, manager of Gautier and Vancleave public libraries.

West stood surrounded by boxes of donations of books, puzzles and toys and said she just couldn't stand to cancel the book sale when people just kept bringing in more donations in the weeks after Katrina.

The book sale will be from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. during the mullet festival in the meeting room of the Gautier Library.

Feature reporter Amanda Creel can be reached at acreel@mspressonline.com.

Royalty

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butions to the community.

The queen for 2005 is Cathy Schmucker, who was chosen for her dedication to the city league and high school sport programs. Schmucker is employed as a teacher's assistant at College Park Elementary.

The king for 2005 is Johnny May, who is being recognized for his efforts to save people during Hurricane Katrina and for his work to clean up Gautier after the storm. May is in charge of the street department for the city.

Both May and Schmucker seemed humbled by their selection, agreeing they knew other people they felt were more deserving of adorning the royal garments during the mullet fest.

"All I know is that I didn't

do anything that I wouldn't do any day of the week," May said.

May, who with the help of two other city workers, Keith Young and Charley Rouse, worked to save people from the rising storm surge of Hurricane Katrina on Aug. 29.

"I didn't do this by myself. One man could not do it by himself," May said.

May said he loves Gautier and that it is the only place he could ever call home, which is why he was out working as hard as he could to get Gautier cleaned up after the Category 4 storm.

"After the storm, I got out here and cut the grass and put up the flags. I wanted to put things back where something is familiar, recognizable," May said. "I just think that people need that."

Schmucker was surprised by her selection and she said she had nominated other people in the community to reign over the festivities. She added that it was an honor to a part of something so positive in the midst so much negative in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

"People need something to do, everyone is so busy taking care of their houses and getting their lives back together," Schmucker said. "People need a chance to relax and listen to some music."

Schmucker said one of the things she is looking forward to the most is seeing the children that she has taught in years past and being able to bless them as part of her royal duties.

Reporter Amanda Creel can be reached at acreel@mspressonline.com.